

**City of Columbus
Regular Planning Commission Meeting
December 4, 2013**

The December 4, 2013 regular meeting of the Planning Commission for the City of Columbus was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Barbara Hvass at the City Hall. Present were Commission members Andy Anderson, Myron Organ, Pam Wolowski, Jesse Preiner, and Garth Sternberg; City Administrator Elizabeth Mursko, and Recording Secretary Karen Boland.

Also in attendance were Tim Lang and Pat Preiner.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Motion by Preiner to approve the Agenda as presented. Second by Wolowski. Votes as follows: Sternberg – abstain; Preiner – aye; Wolowski – aye; Organ – aye; Anderson – aye; Hvass - aye. Motion carried.

APPROVAL – NELSON PRELIMINARY/FINAL PLAT PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 20, 2013

Motion by Anderson to approve the minutes from the Nelson Preliminary/Final Plat Public Hearing held on November 20, 2013. Second by Organ. Votes as follows: Sternberg – abstain; Preiner – aye; Wolowski – aye; Organ – aye; Anderson – aye; Hvass - aye. Motion carried.

APPROVAL – HAIR PRELIMINARY/FINAL PLAT PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 2, 2013

Motion by Anderson to approve the minutes from the Hair Preliminary/Final Plat Public Hearing held on November 20, 2013. Second by Organ. Votes as follows: Sternberg – abstain; Preiner – aye; Wolowski – aye; Organ – aye; Anderson – aye; Hvass - aye. Motion carried.

APPROVAL - REGULAR PC MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 20, 2013

Motion by Preiner to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2013 regular Planning Commission meeting as written. Second by Anderson. Votes as follows: Sternberg – abstain; Preiner – aye; Wolowski – aye; Organ – aye; Anderson – aye; Hvass - aye. Motion carried.

CONTINUED DISCUSSION – IAAI COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT, REZONING AMENDMENT AND CUP APPLICATION

The continued discussion regarding requests by Insurance Auto Auctions, Inc. (IAAI) for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment, a Rezoning Amendment, and a CUP application was postponed due to inclement weather, until December 18, 2013.

TIM LANG PRESENTATION – TIMBER VALLEY PRESERVE

Lang was asked to come in and explain to PC members the challenges he faces in trying to develop a large parcel of land with pockets of upland surrounded by wetlands. Lang owns five 40-acre pieces. Six or seven years ago he put together a preliminary plat. He couldn't develop the land beyond the front 40 acres because of restrictions by the Coon Creek Watershed.

Lang is a builder. He gave an example of a cluster development in Lake Elmo that allows one-acre lots in the upland area. They have a community collector system that allows for smaller lots, more trees and more flexibility. The homeowners have an association, and the whole development pays a company so much per home/per month to take care of the upkeep.

Currently, with the five-acre minimum, only eight houses could be built on that front forty. By going to one-acre lots, even with septic, you could build 15-20 homes on that same 40-acre parcel. He said Ham Lake used to have a two-and-one-half-acre minimum with 200 feet of frontage. They have gone to one-acre lots. It makes limited upland much more feasible to develop. The smaller lots also make it more reasonable for people to buy a home.

Lang was asked about Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) and doing lot averaging with a set minimum. He was asked about common ownership of green space. He said he knows of a development in Lino Lakes that has an association and a green space with a walking path. They have sewer and water there.

Mursko said the MPCA says the ideal minimum for a house with a septic and an alternate is one acre.

There was discussion about creating different density zones. In some areas, having smaller lot sizes would have little or no affect on surrounding property owners. The development on Jodrell Street was discussed. They are broken into long, thin five-acre parcels, but, basically the houses are on one-acre lots. It is a nice looking neighborhood.

Mursko said the Met Council requires rural communities to keep an overall density of 10 in 1. Because of all the Carlos Avery land within the City, the Met Council has allowed Columbus a 5-in-1 density. It doesn't matter how this is done; there is room for flexibility. With Lang's property as an example, if the entire 200 acres were included in a development of 40 houses, it would meet the overall density requirement.

There was discussion about looking at shorter frontages to make development easier in some places. With a PUD, the City comes up with minimum criteria, e.g average density has to be five acres, you have to follow wetland restrictions, we'll allow you to go down to 100-foot frontage minimum, but vary them in and make it all look good; then you let the developer design it. The developer comes in with a plan, and the PC looks at it and negotiates changes until it is something the PC will accept. Currently our ordinance does not allow PUDs.

Mursko talked about whether stake ownership of the unbuildable land by homeowners on the front 40 would be a possibility. To keep to overall density requirements, the unbuildable land would have to be part of a development of the front 40. Lang said he doesn't know if it would be economically feasible for him if it involved all 200 acres, but only one 40-acre parcel was developed. He also questions whether 40 homes would work on the front 40 unless there was a community collector system. He would want to build nice homes and have a nice-looking development.

The City Administrator and PC members expressed their appreciation to Lang for taking the time to come in and talk to them.

PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

There was no topic raised for discussion for Open Forum.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mursko reported that the PC's continued discussion on IAAI's requests will take place at the December 18, 2013 meeting. Any recommendation by the PC will not go to the City Council until January 8, 2014. Due to the January 1st holiday, the only PC meeting in January will be on January 15, 2014.

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS' REPORT

Nothing to report.

ATTENDANCE - NEXT CC MEETING

There is no need for a PC member to present at the City Council meeting on December 11, 2013.

Motion by Preiner to adjourn. Second by Anderson. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Karen Boland, Recording Secretary